

Risk factors for suicide

A combination of individual, relational, community and societal factors contribute to the risk of suicide. Risk factors are those characteristics associated with suicide – they might not be direct causes.

Risk factors

Some of the risk factors may include:

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of child maltreatment
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- History of mental disorders, particularly clinical depression
- History of alcohol and substance use
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- Cultural and religious beliefs (e.g., the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma)
- Local epidemics of suicide
- Isolation, a feeling of being cut off from other people
- Barriers to accessing mental health treatment
- Loss (relational, social, work or financial)
- Physical illness
- Easy access to lethal methods
- Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health and substance use disorders or to suicidal thoughts

Protective factors for suicide

Protective factors buffer individuals from suicidal ideation and behavior. Protective factors have not been studied as extensively or rigorously as risk factors. However, identifying and understanding preventative and protective factors are equally important as researching risk factors. Some protective factors can include:

- Effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance use disorders
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for those seeking help
- Family and community support to increase connectedness
- Support from ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
- Skills in problem-solving, conflict resolution and non-violent ways of handling disputes
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and instead support instincts for self-preservation

If you are someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If you are in an immediate medical crisis, please call 911.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention